

The Transition of Menopause

Menopause is a natural stage of life, but it often brings more than just physical changes. Alongside hot flushes, disrupted sleep, and fatigue, many women notice shifts in their mental health too. Anxiety and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) can feel stronger during this time, even for women who have managed their symptoms well before.

Why Hormones Matter

Hormones like oestrogen and progesterone regulate the reproductive system and influence brain chemicals linked to mood, sleep, and stress. When these hormones fluctuate or decline, it can lead to:

- Increased anxiety, mood swings, and irritability
- Stronger intrusive thoughts and compulsions
- Heightened vulnerability if you already live with OCD

Tracking your cycle, mood, and OCD symptoms can be a helpful way to see how hormones and mental health interact.

How OCD and Anxiety May Show Up

During perimenopause, hormonal shifts can create a “rollercoaster” effect on the nervous system. You may notice:

- Intrusive thoughts showing up more often or feeling “stickier”
- Compulsions increasing as a way to cope with uncertainty
- New obsession themes such as health fears, relationship worries, or responsibility concerns
- Mood changes (irritability, low mood, tearfulness) amplifying OCD distress
- Night sweats, insomnia and fatigue can make it harder to resist compulsions & obsessive loops.
- Poor sleep can intensify OCD

What Can Help

- Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP) remains the gold-standard treatment for OCD. Acceptance-based strategies can also help manage physical and emotional discomfort.
- Lifestyle supports: Prioritise rest, gentle movement, balanced nutrition, and stress reduction.
- Professional support: Your GP & psychologist can work together. Sometimes medication or hormone treatment may play a role.
- Self-compassion: Menopause is a transition, not a failing. Treat yourself with the same kindness you would offer a friend.

Menopause can make OCD feel more intense, but you don't have to face it alone. With the right support and strategies, you can reduce OCD's grip and move through this chapter with hope.